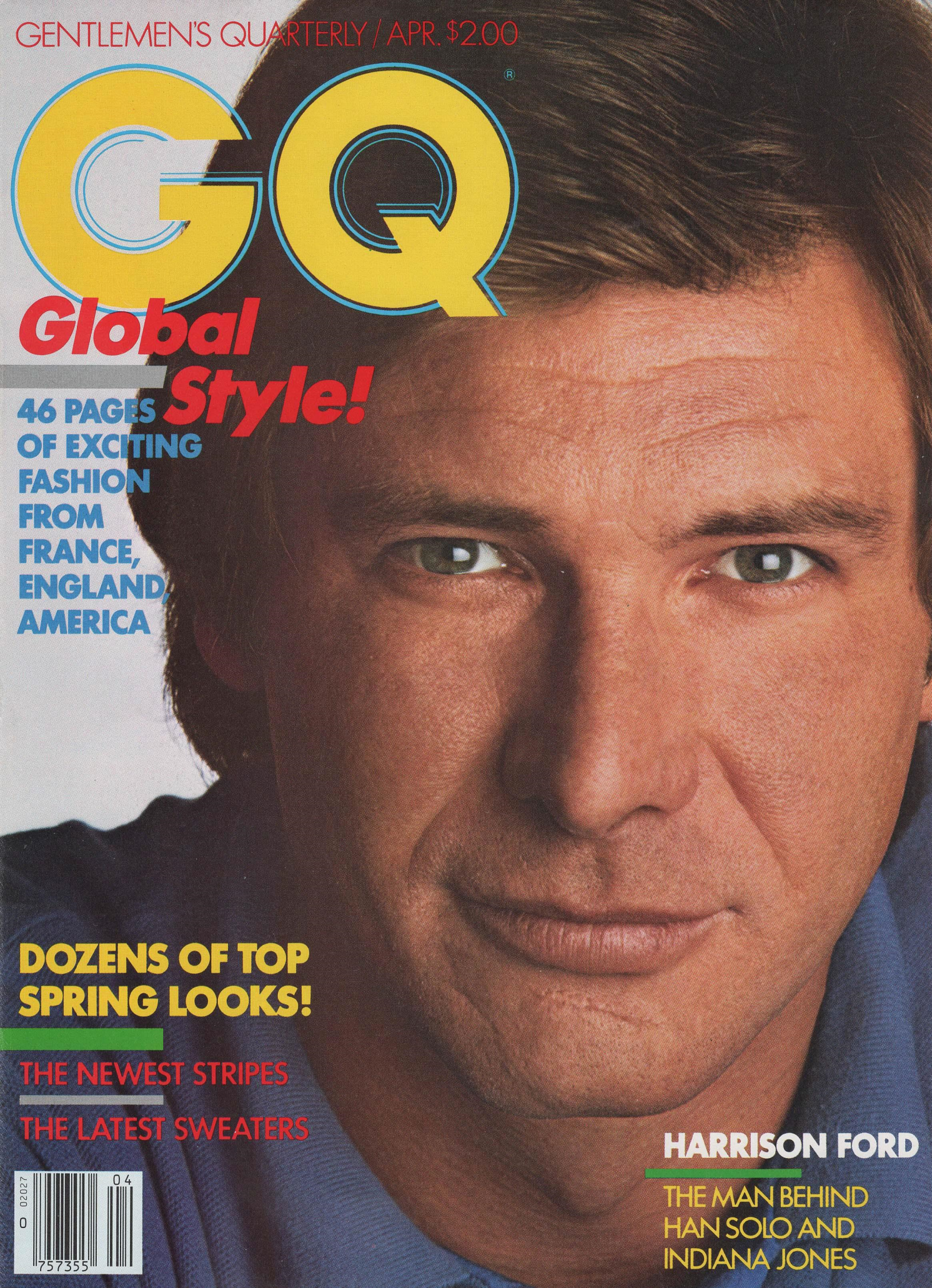
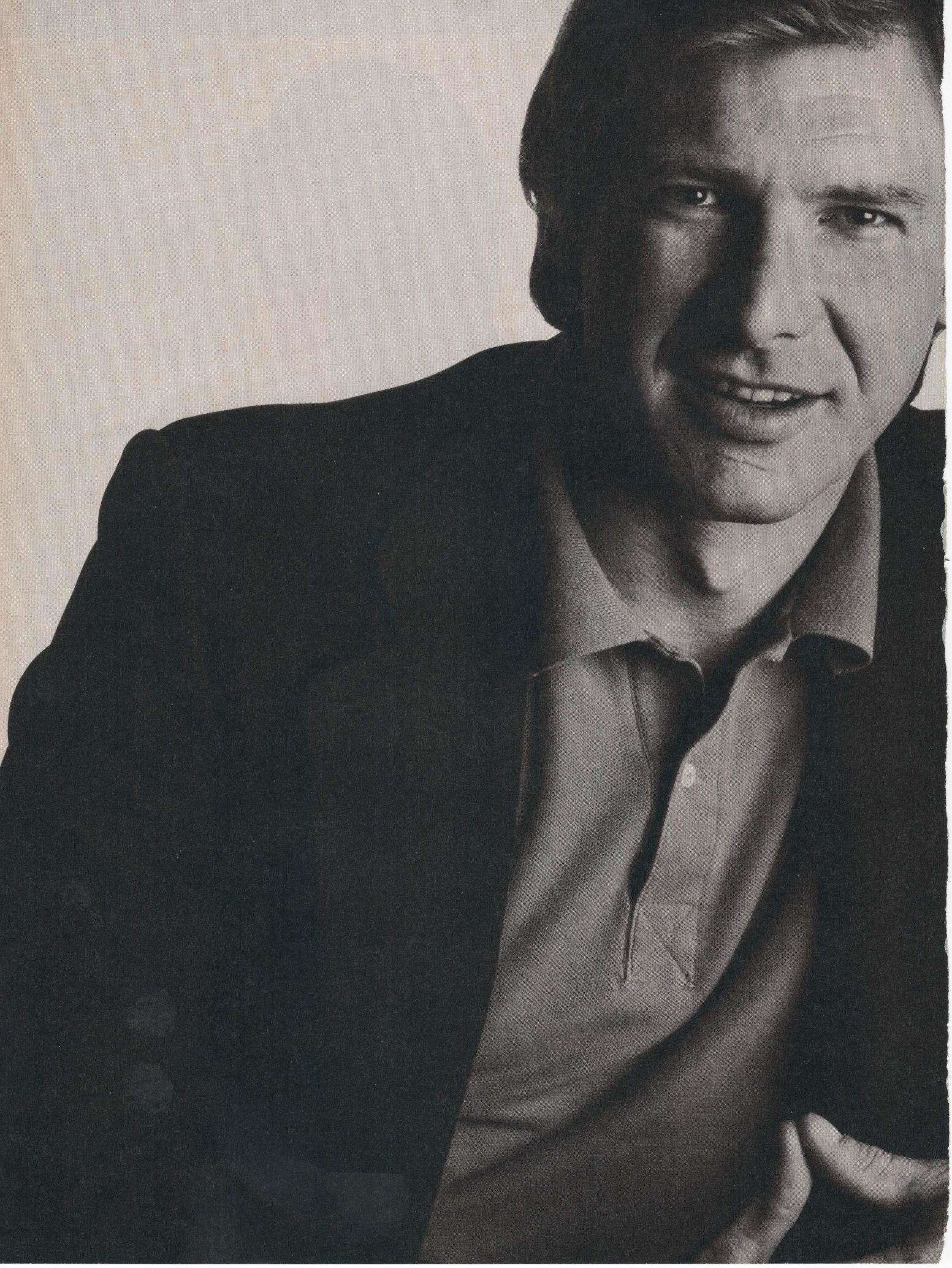

GENTLEMEN'S QUARTERLY / APR. $2.00
GQ
Global Style!
46 PAGES OF EXCITING FASHION FROM FRANCE, ENGLAND, AMERICA
DOZENS OF TOP SPRING LOOKS!
THE NEWEST STRIPES
THE LATEST SWEATERS
HARRISON FORD
THE MAN BEHIND HAN SOLO AND INDIANA JONES
0 02027 04
757355



out of character

harrison ford fought hollywood's star wars and won

By William Wilson ● Photographed for GQ by David Bailey

Gathering place for people-watching and celebrity-spotting *par excellence*, Langan's Brasserie sits just off Piccadilly in the gone-corporate yet still tony Mayfair district of London. There, the contents of one's plate are generally subordinated to the look, feel and repercussions of the dining experience. And it's in this room that Harrison Ford is firmly remonstrating with a waiter who's intent on refilling, to the brim, the wine glass of his tablemate every time a sip is taken.

"Now, we've determined," he begins, in a tone of voice even a fellow American might have trouble reading accurately, and which surely eludes the waiter, who can't possibly hail from anywhere farther north than Corsica, "that unless we pour all the wine ourselves we'll never know how much we've drunk. This gentleman," and Ford's eyes arch theatrically in the direction of his tablemate, "is very careful about his consumption." At this point, the waiter, in the belief that he's entering into the spirit of the moment, asks, of the potentially overwined tablemate, "Are you driving tonight, sir?" But it's Ford who provides the response: "He's *driven*. Which to him is much more important. Therefore, he has to watch himself. Thank you."

It's really an amazing performance, especially coming from an actor perhaps best known for his way with lines like, in "Raiders of the Lost Ark," "It's not the years, honey, it's the mileage," and in "Star Wars," "It'll take a megasecond for the nava computer to calculate those coordinates." The elaborateness of the words' construction, the courtliness of the delivery, the sheer *(continued on page 190)*

continued from page 153

amount of time the exchange consumed prompted a listener to wonder whether this really was Harrison Ford talking. And what, exactly, did being "driven" signify? "That was something," the tablemate demurs. "Yeah, I guess it was," Ford assents, speaking, as is his wont, slightly downward, into his navy crew-neck sweater. "I managed to put him off and draw him in at the same time."

At 39 (he turns 40 in July), Harrison Ford has, it turns out, perfected both those talents. The "drawing-in" one is perhaps best documented by Variety, the show-business industry's monitor and bible. Of the five most profitable movies ever, Ford has starred in three, including the top grosser, "Star Wars"; the second, "The Empire Strikes Back," the sequel to "Star Wars"; and the fifth, "Raiders of the Lost Ark." With the third installment of the "Star Wars" trilogy, "The Revenge of the Jedi," currently being filmed at London's Elstree Studios and slated for spring 1983 release, as well as at least one "Raiders" sequel already scheduled for shooting right after that, unless public tastes change drastically, Ford can only consolidate his position as one of the most bankable actors in the New Hollywood of George Lucas and Steven Spielberg. Two of the most entrepreneurial and trailblazing *Wunderkinder* American movie making has seen since the Thirties, they're also arguably more responsible for creating space cowboy Han Solo and whip-slinging archeologist Indiana Jones than Ford himself. Spielberg, however, director of "Raiders," has credited the actor with "seven ideas to my five" while making the movie and for carrying it with "his charisma and ability."

Ford's skill at "putting off" has less to do with movies—although his engaging and titillating performances do tend, like, say, Bogart's, to keep audiences at arm's length, to center on irony rather than courtship—and more to do with the man. Reticent, sometimes to the point of self-deprecation, oblique, sometimes to the point of obfuscation, he appears to resent not only the liabilities, but the largesse, of stardom. Certainly, to hear Ford tell it, the entire business has simply gotten out of hand. "My ambition," he says, "was to do actor's work. I thought it would be fun to do different things all the time, to go different places. I never literally thought about having the kind of success that would put me in a position where I'd have to think about, to anticipate. . . ." At this point, his voice trails off. "Obviously 'Star Wars' was a major box-office success. And, at the time, I still hadn't given very much thought to the additive effect that such successes would have on my private life.

"My ambition was to do actor's work —doing different things all the time."

"In Beverly Hills," he continues, "if I'm walking down the street, I don't look people in the face. I keep my eyes focused on the ground about ten feet in front of me. If I have to stop and wait outside a store for somebody, I know I have to keep my back to the street. Not because each individual is an annoyance, but the effect of it all is to put me totally out of the place I want to be. And yet what I do to avoid it impinges as much upon my life as the thing itself. It's a bind and it's one that I never thought about; in a court of law I'd be called a willing co-conspirator."

There's no flash here. Just a big six-footer, square at the shoulders and round in the face, with more-or-less green eyes behind a pair of aviator-style clear-lens glasses, a slightly twisted upper lip and a scar on the chin. ("It's from when I was working as the assistant buyer for knick-knacks and oil paintings at Bullock's in Santa Ana. One morning on the way to work, trying to get my safety belt fastened, I went through the windshield of my Volvo.") Although trim, Ford's top form is strictly natural. "I'm sure I'm coordinated to some degree," he says. "Maybe I have a little extra manual dexterity than most, but in no way am I an athlete." As he's said before, "I'm a notorious powder puff. I'm one of the founding members of that underground of anti-joggers. I don't train. I'm saying this even though I know I'm getting older." While he's certainly handsome enough, Ford could be your college roommate twenty years later.

"If I'm walking down the street, I don't look people in the face. I keep my eyes on the ground. If I have to stop and wait outside a store for somebody, I keep my back to the street."

Not only doesn't he *look* like a star—after all, neither does Richard Dreyfuss or, when push comes to shove, Al Pacino—Ford doesn't seem to think like one, either. Which isn't to say he's self-effacing: His taking the matter of the too-lavishly-poured wine into his own hands, was, it turns out, no fluke. He's not exactly laidback, either. Receptive, slow, mild, he's still determined to be in control of any moment that comes his way in a manner that runs counter to the popular stereotype of "being from California."

Of course, Ford *isn't* from California. Born in the city of Chicago, he went to Ripon College, in deepest Wisconsin, where he majored in philosophy and English, appeared in a college production of "The Skin of Our Teeth," and never got around to writing the paper on the plays of Edward Albee that was to have capped a year of independent study. Instead, he slept and ate pizza, winding up flunking out a week before graduation. After a season of summer stock, he packed up his new wife—whom he'd met during that last year at Ripon (and from whom he's now divorced, with two teen-age sons)—and, his interest in acting rekindled, took off on a honeymoon along the Mississippi that would culminate in Hollywood.

There, Ford did $150-a-week stints at Columbia and Universal, where he, along with other, more or less untried actors and actresses, found himself submitting to the constraints of the studio system, then being given artificial respiration, including rules about how one's hair was to be cut and with whom one was going to be seen at the Oscars. Cast as a bellhop in his first movie, 1966's "Dead Heat on a Merry-Go-Round," Ford *acted* like a bellhop—the initial skirmish in his ongoing war with stardom. "The studio vice-president called me in," he recalls, embarking on a tale that's clearly one of the cornerstones of the Ford edifice, "and said, 'Sit down, kid'—he always called me kid, even though he was only about six years older than I was— 'I want to tell you a story. The first time Tony Curtis was ever in a movie he delivered a bag of groceries. We took one look at him and knew he was a movie star. You ain't got it, kid, you ain't got it. You ain't working hard enough. I want you to go back to class and study. Now get out of here.' *That's* when I knew I was right, because I knew how wrong he was. I knew that when a guy delivers groceries, you aren't supposed to think he's a movie star, you're supposed to think that he's a grocery delivery boy."

It was at this point, still in the mid-Sixties, after a few TV jobs—"the same stuff over and over"—that Ford, in the course of fixing over his new house by the Hollywood Bowl, took up carpentry. "I didn't know anything about it, but I got books out of the library, got the tools and, for about eight years, just did it, making cabinets and furniture, remodeling. It was great. I submitted myself totally to the logic of it. It was a wonderful thing to learn—and I could see my accomplishments." Ford's first paid job in his newly acquired craft was building a multimillion-dollar recording studio in Brazilian musician Sergio Mendes's backyard. Meanwhile, he had decided to forgo acting unless the part made sense to him in terms of his career. As it happened, small roles in George Lucas's "American Grafitti," as the new, hell-raising hotrodder in town, and in Francis Ford Coppola's "The Conversation," did make sense. Even so, he earned half of what he'd have made as a carpenter during the same period.

It's late, and a bottle-plus of wine later. Ford is using the blade of his bread knife to draw on the white linen tablecloth. And the conversation has become complicated. He's telling about—and diagramming, too—the doors of the Malibu beach house he worked on for husband-and-wife writers John Gregory Dunne and Joan Didion, explaining about rabbeting (in carpentry, a way of fitting together adjoining pieces of wood), weather-stripping and California building practices ("After the War, there'd been no building during the War, and when they came back. . . ."). As part of the same story, he's talking about locks, responsibility, getting to the bottom of things—and getting your own way. It's a complex train of thought, a hazy narrative, and it's late, but Ford eventually reaches his point. "So, I had the locks I needed four days later, free, gratis, just because I'd made it clear that the firm wasn't serving its customers. A person who's got the same last name as a product has to care, to feel personally responsible. I was able to convince him of the sincerity of my wishes."

It's actually a revealing story, providing insight into Ford's commitment to craft (carpentry no less than acting, though, as Ford is quick to point out, "It may be too easy a metaphor"), his earnestness of tone and demeanor, and his confidence in his own powers of articulation, as well as his ability to put things across, to—a phrase he doesn't come up with, but readily agrees to—"project ardor."

Ford's acting, then, is more craft than cunning. Far from manipulating—or even overtly reveling in—the role of movie star, he minimizes it: "I just work here," he says. "And while I've been 'working here'—that (continued on page 192)

GQ Live

GQ's Fashion Editor will be appearing
at the following stores this month.

JOSEPH MAGNIN

presents
"EASY LIVING"
Tips on how to bring style and ease
into all aspects of your life

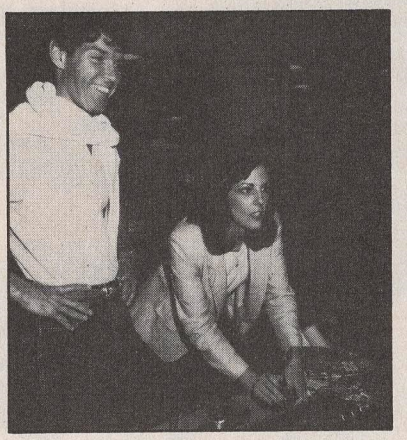
Sunday, April 4, 1982
10 a.m. - 12 noon

GQ Fashion Show
Buffet Brunch & Cocktails
Lifestyle Presentations/Fitness Demos
Door Prizes/Giveaways

Tickets: $10 per person
Please make reservations in advance.

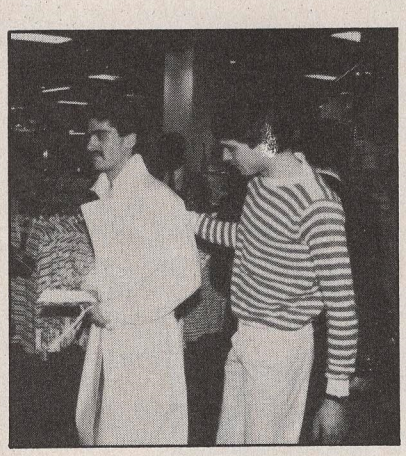
Joseph Magnin
Stockton & O'Farrell
San Francisco, Calif. 94108

For information call: (415) 772-2582



Marshall Field's

Invites you to the opening
of its new Store For Men
in April 1982



Come in and enjoy
GQ's "Manstyle" Video Presentation
The Best in Fashion & Lifestyle Ideas
Fashion Consultations with GQ Editors

And other special activities including:
Designer Personal Appearances
Entertainment/Door Prizes

Open to the public.
Bring this ad for free GQ portfolio.*

Marshall Field's Store For Men
110 North Wabash Avenue
Chicago, Ill. 60690

For information call: (312) 781-4482

Watch for more details in the May issue
of GQ, on the newsstand April 20th.

*quantity limited

out of character

continued from page 190

is, making money as an actor—for seventeen or eighteen years, in a way the story really goes back only six or seven, to 'Star Wars.' Still, six or seven years is a lot of time, and I think I've cracked the question of what it takes. My assumption is the same one I started out with—if you stuck it out long enough, what with the natural force of attrition, you'd wind up one of the guys who was working. After that, it gets repetitive. But there are always strange places, new people. It's like the navy, only you don't have to kill anything."

Ford's most recent "port-of-call" prior to "Jedi" is "Blade Runner," a detective thriller set in a large American city "of the near future" (comprising, according to advance word, "elements of New York, Hong Kong, Tokyo's Ginza section, Milan's business district and London's Piccadilly Circus"), a metropolis where pollution is so bad that the other side of the street is invisible without artificial light. (Director Ridley Scott's first picture since "Alien," it's reportedly a big-budget one.) Ford plays Deckard, who hunts down, à la Philip Marlowe, genetically engineered humanoids in the process of infiltrating a major industrial organization. Is Deckard likely to remind audiences of Han Solo or Indiana Jones? "Uh-uh," Ford insists, "no more than those two reminded audiences of each other. Of course, since both were at least in part the products of the same writer, Lawrence Kasdan, and the same production company, Lucasfilms, we were especially careful. But even so, I don't make up a character who *could* have a life without benefit of the specific story. Solo, Jones, now Deckard—they wear different clothes and they live in different times. I'm not being glib when I say it's as simple as that."

And are there roles Ford feels he *isn't* getting—serious, intimate, talky parts? (It's perhaps worth noting that at least one attempt to turn him into a less action-oriented hero, the World War II-suffused love story, 1979's "Hanover Street," was a complete failure. Not much more successful were his other post-"Star Wars," pre-"Empire" starring vehicles, "Heroes," "Force 10 From Navarone" and "The Frisco Kid.") "Sure," Ford says, then adds disarmingly, "I keep saying I want to do contemporary comedy and they *do* send me good stuff, but they always give me the straight-man part. If I'm going to do it, I want to play the Marsha Mason one."

On his way back to the Athenaeum, the small Piccadilly hotel where he's staying with his lady friend, screenwriter Melissa Mathison, he remarks, "They've gotten John Wayne's old bed out of the attic for me." It's neither Han Solo nor Indiana Jones who's walking there, either. Ford, in a navy overcoat over his navy blazer, navy crew-neck sweater and gray flannel trousers—he characteristically dresses in dark colors—as well as cordovan penny loafer-type slip-ons and dark socks, looks not at all like a swashbuckler, a cowboy or even an archeologist. (What does he think of fashion? "Not a thing. 'If the shoe fits, wear it.' That sounds like hostility, doesn't it?") Bent slightly forward at the waist, his hands clasped behind him as he walks slowly, even meditatively—towards his hotel, Ford suggests nothing more heroic than a country curate. As for the John Wayne bed, the temptation is resisted to investigate whether the little hotel ever really did put up John Wayne, and, if so, if they really did have that monument in storage, and if it really had been dusted off for Harrison Ford. Just as an earlier temptation had been resisted to ask what, precisely, he'd meant when he said, ostensibly of his tablemate, "He's *driven*—which is much more important." GQ